DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 288 262 EA 019 781

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TITLE Actual and Ideal Role Perceptions of Instructional Supervisors in the Public Schools of Virginia.
PUB DATE Nov 87
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Regional Council on Education Administration (Gatlinburg, TN, November 8-10, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; Elementary Secondary Education; *Instructional Improvement; *Instructional Leadership; *Public Schools; *Supervisors; *Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Virginia

ABSTRACT

The ultimate goal of instructional supervisors is to improve instruction by working with teachers and planning, organizing, and evaluating the curricula. A literature review indicates that in reality instructional supervisors are apt to spend most of their time on routine school maintenance functions. The inconsistency between job descriptions and actual supervisory roles needs to be acknowledged and eliminated. Conducted in Virginia schools, this study attempted to determine if differences existed in selected instructional supervisors' perceptions regarding the amount of actual and ideal time allocated for identified supervisory roles. A research-based questionnaire was constructed to include seven roles: curriculum development, staff development, program evaluation, resource provision, information dissemination, instructional leadership, and administrative duties. After a pilot study was conducted, a target population of 726 instructional supervisors was selected from public schools in Virginia. Out of this group, 50 percent (363) were randomly chosen and mailed the questionnaire and a demographic data sheet. There was a 60.6 percent return rate. As expected, the supervisors indicated that they spent a disproportionate amount of time on administrative duties, as opposed to instructional duties. However, female supervisors spent more time on curriculum development, staff development, program evaluation, and instructional leadership than did male supervisors. A dozen other findings are briefly summarized, and numerous recommendations are offered to rectify the discrepancies betwen ideal and actual supervisory roles. (MLH)

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ED288262

ACTUAL AND IDEAL ROLE PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISORS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF VIRGINIA

A Paper Presented at
The Southern Regional Council on Education Administration
Annual Meeting in Gatlinburg, Tennessee
November, 1987

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ACTUAL AND IDEAL ROLE PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISORS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF VIRGINIA

Introduction

Literature describes ideal instructional supervisory roles and responsibilities. However, in practice, there is often a gulf between ideal and actual roles and responsibilities. The inconsistency between job descriptions and actual supervisory roles needs to be acknowledged and eliminated (Sullivan, 1982).

Supervisory training is based on the ideal roles and responsibilities presented in literature. Often the actual roles of instructional supervisors are not congruent with prior supervisory training.

The review of literature revealed that the ultimate goal of instructional supervisors is to improve instruction. Ideally supervisors should work with teachers to improve the teaching-learning process. Supervisors should plan, organize, analyze, and evaluate the instructional programs. The review of literature indicated that in reality, the main role of many instructional supervisors was to maintain day-to-day functions of the school system through administrative or managerial functions. Burch (1980) stated that instructional supervisors were moving from the ideal supervisory role to becoming "jacks-of-all-trades" (p. 627).

Thus, the review of literature revealed that instructional supervisors should spend less time on management roles and more time on instructional leadership roles (Burch, 1980). Glickman (1985) emphasized that "effective schools do not happen by accident. Supervision is the force that shapes the organization into a productive unit" (p. 20).

Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine if differences existed in the perceptions of selected public school instructional supervisors regarding the amount of actual and ideal time allocated for identified supervisory roles. The study was conducted during the 1986-87 school year in Virginia.

Procedure

To obtain the necessary data, a questionnaire was constructed based on selected supervisory roles revealed in the review of literature. The seven supervisory roles included the following: curriculum development, staff development, program evaluation, providing resources, disseminating information, instructional leadership, and administrative duties. A demographic data sheet asked participants to indicate their current supervisory assignment, age, highest degree, if they held a graduate degree in supervision, title, and sex.

A six-week pilot study was conducted with the questionnaire. The questionnaire was field tested with two

groups of 50 randomly selected instructional supervisors in the public schools of Virginia. The pilot test proved to be very beneficial. Many insightful suggestions were made by the supervisors. Thus, changes were made on the original questionnaire. The subsequent improvements increased the clarity of the instrument.

A target population of 726 instructional supervisors was identified. This population included general supervisors, subject specialists, directors, coordinators, and others with supervisory roles. From the target population, 50% (363) were randomly selected to participate in the study.

Data were collected for a four-week period. A 60.6% return was received. The data were statistically analyzed at the East Tennessee State University Research and Computer Center.

Findings

Instructional supervisors in the public schools of Virginia indicated that there was a significant discrepancy between actual and ideal time allocated for the identified supervisory roles. Supervisors in Virginia wanted to spend more time for curriculum development, staff development, program evaluation, providing resources, disseminating information, and instructional leadership than they actually

did. They wanted to spend less time performing administrative duties.

Significant differences were found between supervisory titles and perceptions regarding the amount of actual and ideal time allocated for program evaluation. Subject specialists and general supervisors allocated more actual and ideal time for program evaluation than supervisors with other titles.

In addition, significant differences were found between supervisory titles and perceptions of actual and ideal time allocated for performing administrative duties. Directors allocated more actual and ideal time to performing administrative duties than general supervisors and subject specialists.

There was also a significant difference between male and female supervisors' perceptions of actual and ideal time allocated for program evaluation. Female supervisors allocated more actual and ideal time for program evaluation than male supervisors.

Conclusions

The following conclusions concerning instructional supervisors in the public schools of Virginia are based on the findings of this research:

1. Instructional supervisors are not spending as much time as they want to for curriculum development, staff development, program evaluation, providing resources, disseminating information, and instructional leadership.

2. Instructional supervisors are spending more time performing administrative duties than they prefer.

3. Secondary supervisors devote more time to curriculum development and to providing resources than other supervisors.

4. Elementary supervisors spend more time for program evaluation and providing instructional leadership than other supervisors.

5. K-12 instructional supervisors spend more time performing administrative duties than other supervisors.

6. Younger supervisors (30-39) devote more time to staff development, providing resources, and providing instructional leadership than older supervisors.

7. Instructional supervisors with doctorate degrees spend more time for curriculum development, staff development, disseminating information, and instructional leadership than supervisors with other degrees.

8. Titles influence the amount of actual and ideal time that instructional supervisors allocate for the selected supervisory roles. For example, general supervisors spend more time for curriculum development and program evaluation than supervisors with other titles. In

addition, coordinators spend more time for staff development than supervisors with other titles. Furthermore, directors spend more time disseminating information than supervisors with other titles.

9. Supervisors with graduate degrees in supervision allocate more time for staff development and performing administrative duties than supervisors without graduate degrees in supervision. Supervisors with graduate degrees in supervision also want to spend more time providing instructional leadership than supervisors without graduate degrees in supervision.

10. Female supervisors spend more time for curriculum development, staff development, program evaluation, and instructional leadership than male supervisors.

11. Male supervisors devote a little more time to performing administrative duties, providing resources, and disseminating information than female supervisors.

12. Role conflict is apparent among instructional supervisors. The conflict is obvious in the actual and ideal time that they allocate for the selected supervisory roles. In addition, there is role conflict among supervisors with different supervisory assignments, age categories, degrees, and titles.

13. A graduate degree in supervision and a supervisor's gender does not have much influence on the allocation of actual and ideal time for some supervisory

roles. Even though differences were found between the variables on the demographic data sheet and the allocation of actual and ideal time for the identified supervisory roles, not all differences were significant at the .05 level. The association between the variables and allocation of the actual and ideal time was often weak. For example, differences between supervisors with a degree in supervision and supervisors without a degree in supervision and the allocation of actual and ideal time for curriculum development, program evaluation, providing resources, and disseminating information were weak. Weak associations were also found between males and females' allocation of actual and ideal time for providing resources, disseminating information, and performing administrative duties. Thus, these weak associations indicated that neither a graduate degree in supervision nor the gender of a supervisor had any effect on the amount of actual and ideal time allocated for some of the supervisory roles.

Recommendations

1. Define actual supervisory roles.

2. Supervisory training programs should teach leadership skills. Supervisory training programs should train supervisors to perform administrative tasks as effectively and efficiently as possible. This suggests training supervisors in the use of administrative software

and computers to speed up the time-consuming process aligned with performing many administrative duties.

3. School systems should strive to break down the broad K-12 supervisory assignment.

4. School systems should look to young supervisors (30-39) for innovative ideas and instructional leadership.

5. Instructional supervisors should be encouraged to obtain a doctorate degree in supervision.

6. Further study should be conducted on actual and ideal roles of instructional supervisors. Research should be conducted to find out what factors, other than performing administrative duties, alienate supervisors from the ideal roles.

7. This study should be replicated by other researchers. This would strengthen the credibility of the conclusions.

Summary

In summary, this research shows there is a gulf between ideal and actual roles of instructional supervisors in the public schools of Virginia. The future training of instructional supervisors, job descriptions, and role expectations could be improved by this and similar research. Job descriptions and limitations under which instructional supervisors operate must be identified and analyzed. Supervisory roles and titles must be better defined to avoid

role conflict and to clarify role expectations. Job descriptions should clearly identify the actual roles of supervisors. For the utmost improvement to occur in education, supervisors must assume the role of change agents. Job descriptions should specify this role regardless of the titles.

Supervisory training is based on ideal roles and responsibilities as presented in literature. However, actual roles are not totally congruent with prior supervisory training. Supervisory training programs should continue to stress the ultimate goal of instructional supervision as improving instruction. Further emphasis needs to be placed on instructional leadership. For with strong instructional leadership, the other supervisory roles will be strengthened. Instructional leadership is the integral part of the whole supervisory process.

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